

# Suzanne Ravenall

## - Leading by Example

***'Be known for your principles, make them simple, understood and stick to them in all circumstances, even when it doesn't bode well for you. Life is all about choices. If you really put your mind to something you want to do in your life, you can really do it. Everybody has the ability to be a success, whatever success means to you. It's up to you to set the benchmark.'***

**By Janine Fynn**



**Suzanne Ravenall, Group CEO, Beyond Outsourcing**

**S**uzanne Ravenall was born and grew up in the UK. Having qualified with O' levels and a secretarial diploma, she set her mind to getting her first job. She began her career as a Secretary/PA at the young age of seventeen. She was responsible for the management of various projects, which Suzanne handled with the ease and single-minded determination that would catapult her into the corporate world later in her career. After just twelve months in her position as PA, she already felt she had outgrown her job and wished to develop her skills in a more challenging environment.

Suzanne applied for many jobs in sales and after much perseverance, secured an interview with a key company. After interviewing many applicants who had previous experience in sales, the company awarded Suzanne the position, in spite of her lack of sales experience. After working for the company as a sales manager for just twelve months, she was given the additional responsibility of training MBA graduates fresh out of

university. In light of her own lack of university education, Suzanne found it odd. She noted that although the graduates were great both technically and strategically, they didn't necessarily always possess the application capacity. Additionally, at the same time, she began to realize that the world was speeding up on a day-to-day basis. Innovation, technology and competition were forcing the business world to take a new and different approach to the management of business and execution thereof. Taking these two components into account, she realized that looking twenty years into the future, there could be a major execution gap. Having worked in the outsourcing environment, she decided that she could formulate her business around these precepts of approaching a business with a product; applying a performance improvement methodology and ensuring the predictable execution on an outsourcing basis.

Realizing this major gap in the market at a tender age, Suzanne grew from strength to strength, quickly developing her skills and talents in marketing and sales. After five years of working for various companies doing a million different things, Suzanne was asked to go and work for an outsourcing company to spearhead a new outsourcing contract. Suzanne's job was to set up the entire infrastructure and ensure it's success.

Suzanne moved to South Africa, where her company Beyond Outsourcing was born in 1997, with a initial staff complement of just seven. Nominated as one of the top South African business women in 2003, by both Nedbank and African Investor, Suzanne's contribution to the corporate world has been phenomenal. Beyond Outsourcing is a company that is 25.1% black empowered and various programmes are implemented for the training of disadvantaged people.

From secretary to CEO of her own business, a business that now is one of the biggest, majority female-owned in South Africa, the philosophy behind it all is truly amazing. Suzanne Ravenall's climb up the corporate ladder, and her experience as a business woman in South Africa, have earned her nomination as top business executive on numerous occasions. In closing she shares her valuable insight:-

*'It's not about trying to change yourself to fit in, it's about understanding that there are generation gaps and cultural diversities. It's about appreciating differences between people and appreciating differences between gender and generations. Success comes with understanding these dynamics and maintaining an attitude of perpetual optimism.'*